

century, the Moors maintained their own schools and in World War I and II insisted on being listed as a separate race. As with the Amish and Mennonites, the Moor community exists today.

The patterning and density of settlement in Delaware, and the study area specifically, have been strongly influenced by several factors throughout its history: 1) an agrarian economy; 2) the commodity demands of large markets, first Europe and the West Indies, and later domestic commercial-industrial centers, and 3) transportation facilities. The completion of the Dupont Highway in 1923 linked the northern and southern sections of the state and helped to complete the shift in agricultural production towards non-local markets and open new areas to productive agriculture. Improved transportation in the twentieth century also brought a decline in the importance of the many small crossroad and "corner" communities that had sprung up in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

#### **BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

The possible existence of an unmarked cemetery in the path of the proposed realignment of Lafferty Lane was revealed during a routine archival investigation of the proposed right-of-way. The Hopkins Plots Collection at the State Bureau of Archives in Dover, Delaware contained an 1878 plot of William Dyer's 242 acre farm (formerly the Francis Register farm). The Hopkins Plot (Figure 4) noted one corner of the property with this caption: "a stone in a grave yard, said to be the headstone of the grave of Robert Graham, deceased, by Nehemiah & Henry M. Clark, Surveyors in February 1844 - and is a corner of the McMullen tract in the



line of the Brown tract."

A second reference to the presence of a cemetery at this location came from a deed transferring 8 acres, 54 perches of land from James McMullen, yeoman [farmer], to Robert Graham, webster [weaver], May 17, 1804. One of the boundaries was given as "...a stake in brown's (sic) graveyard standing about a north course from a hickory in sd. graveyard..." (Kent County Deeds H-2-232).

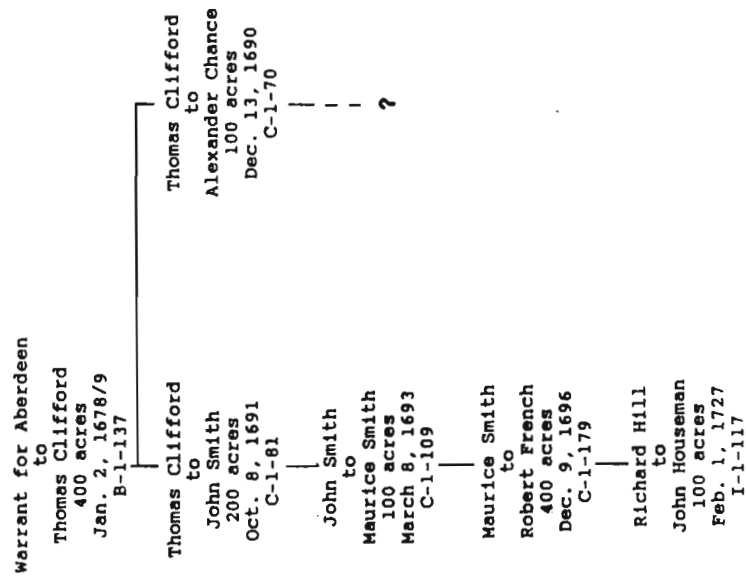
A final reference to the presence of a cemetery at this location was found in Kent County Deed R-2-462 (Jan. 21, 1818). In this deed, Arthur Johns transferred 12 acres to James McMullen and his wife and one of the property corners was described as "... a corner on Robert Graham's grave... " Based on these three references, it was concluded that research into the Brown and Graham families and their descendants was critical to the understanding of the site. To this end, various public records were consulted in order to gather information about these families. These records included census data, deeds, orphan's court cases, tax assessments, and other records. The results of this research are presented in the following sections entitled "Land Records" and "Genealogical Reconstruction".

## **LAND RECORDS**

A title search of the property (Figure 5) revealed that the cemetery location was part of a 400 acre parcel called "Aberdeen" originally warranted to Thomas Clifford on January 2, 1678/9 (KCD B-1-137). Over the course of the next 60-70 years, the land was divided and reformed under various owners who generally possessed

FIGURE 5

# Summary of Deed Transactions



## FIGURE 5B

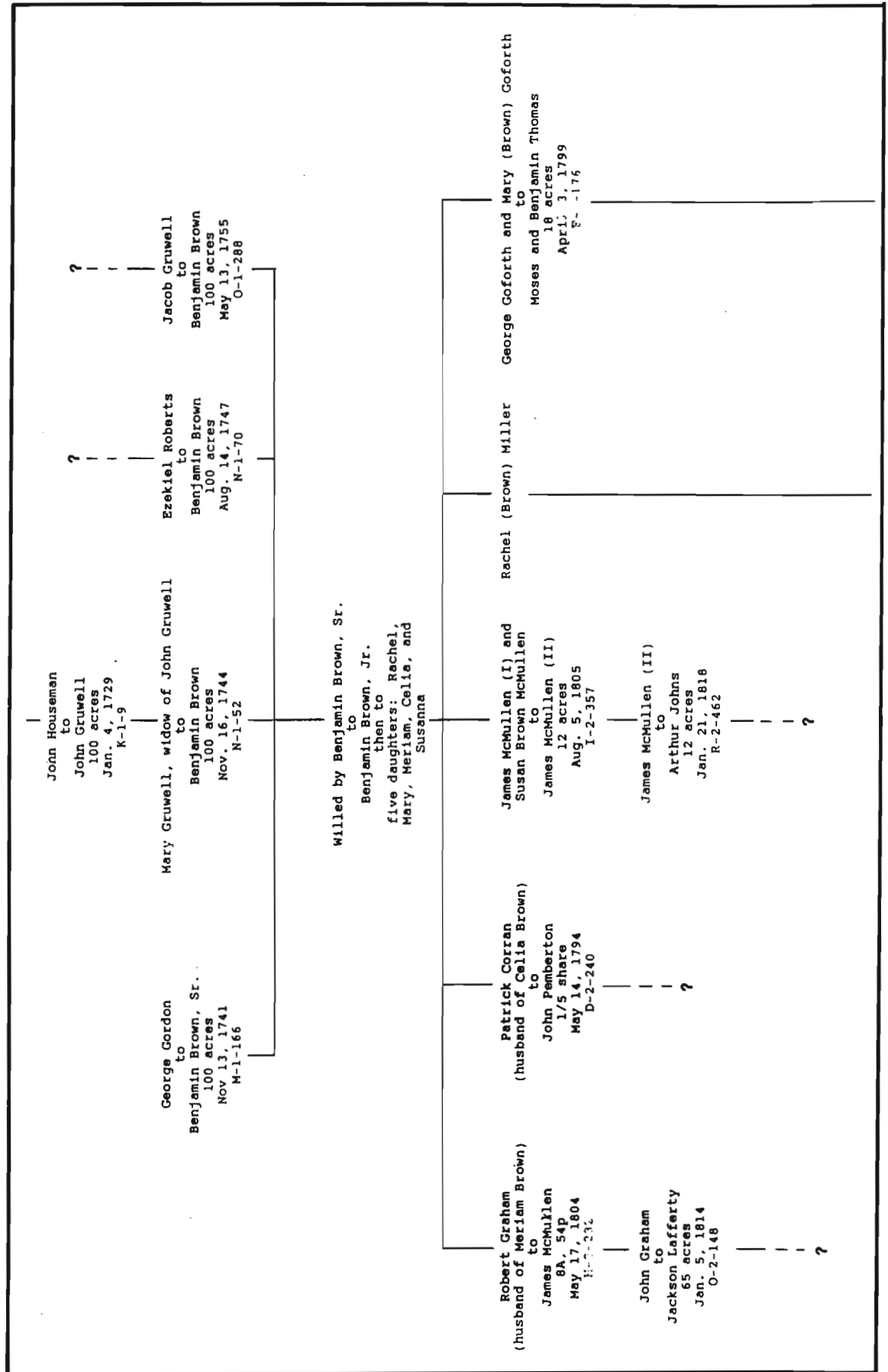


FIGURE 5C

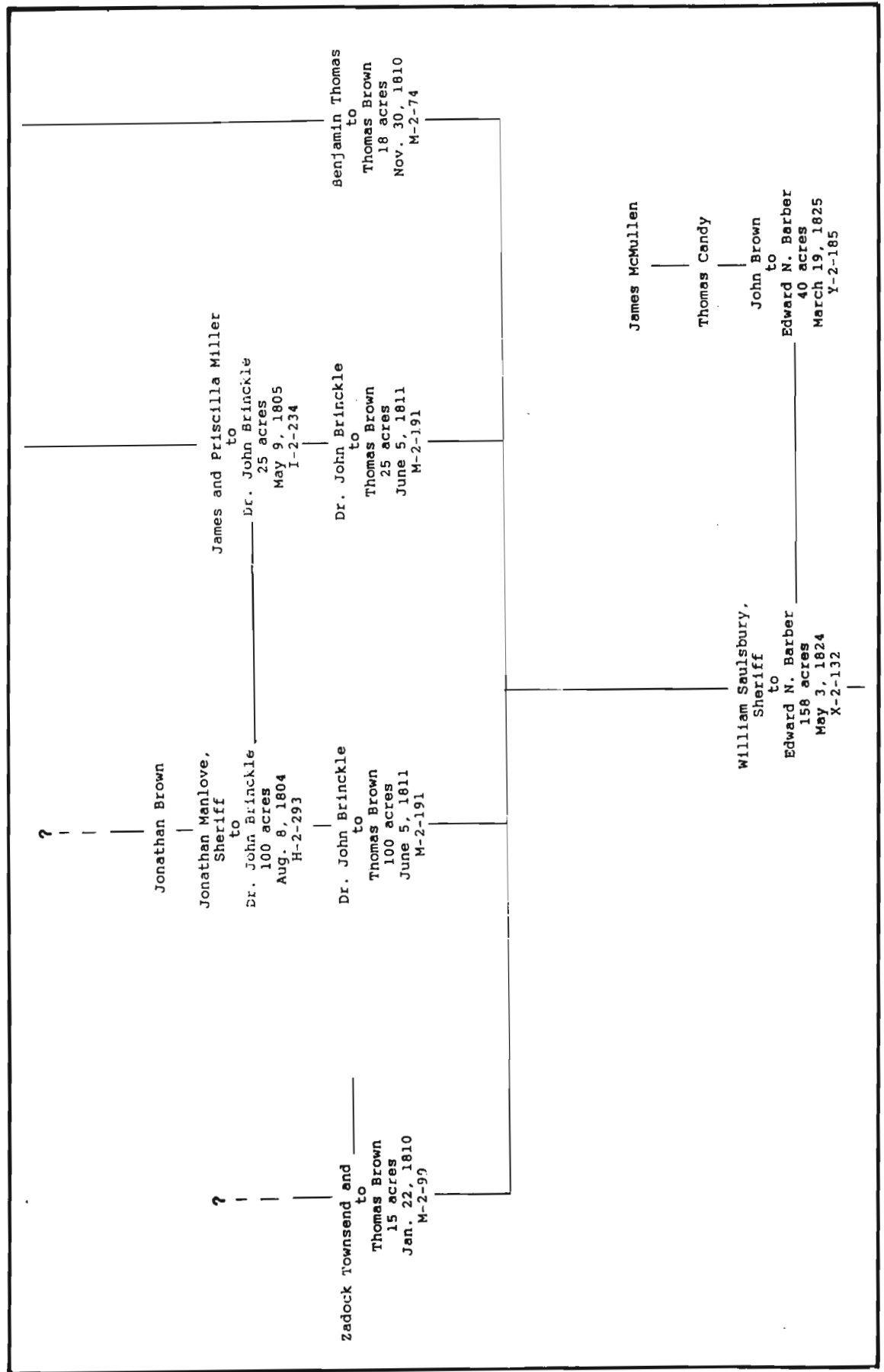


FIGURE 5D

Edward N. Barber  
to  
Benjamin Barber  
198 acres  
Dec. 26, 1825  
Z-2-21

Benjamin Barber  
to  
Andrew Harper  
198 acres  
Feb. 14, 1833  
G-3-134

Andrew Harper  
to  
Francis Register  
195 acres  
Aug. 2, 1833  
G-3-135

Francis Register  
to  
William Dyer  
250 acres  
Sept. 2, 1865  
Z-4-458

William Dyer  
to  
Frank, Howard, and  
William Maloney  
Oct. 2, 1919  
P-11-185

William Maloney and wife  
to  
William Gross  
149 acres  
June 11, 1935  
Q-14-396

FIGURE 5E

William Gross and Anna W. Gross to George C. Rothwell and Neva, his wife 149 acres June 8, 1945 P-17-109	George C. Rothwell and wife to Harold Rau and wife 149 acres May 22, 1950 Y-18-394	Harold J. Rau and Norma B. Rau to Eleanor Davis 149 acres March 7, 1951 F-19-156	Eleanor Davis to Harold J. Rau and Norma B. Rau 149 acres March 7, 1951 F-19-159	Harold J. Rau and Norma B. Rau to James Julian Inc. 6 acres April 8, 1959 A-22-488	Harold J. Rau & Norma B. Rau to James Julian Inc. 89 acres Nov 4, 1959 F-22-282
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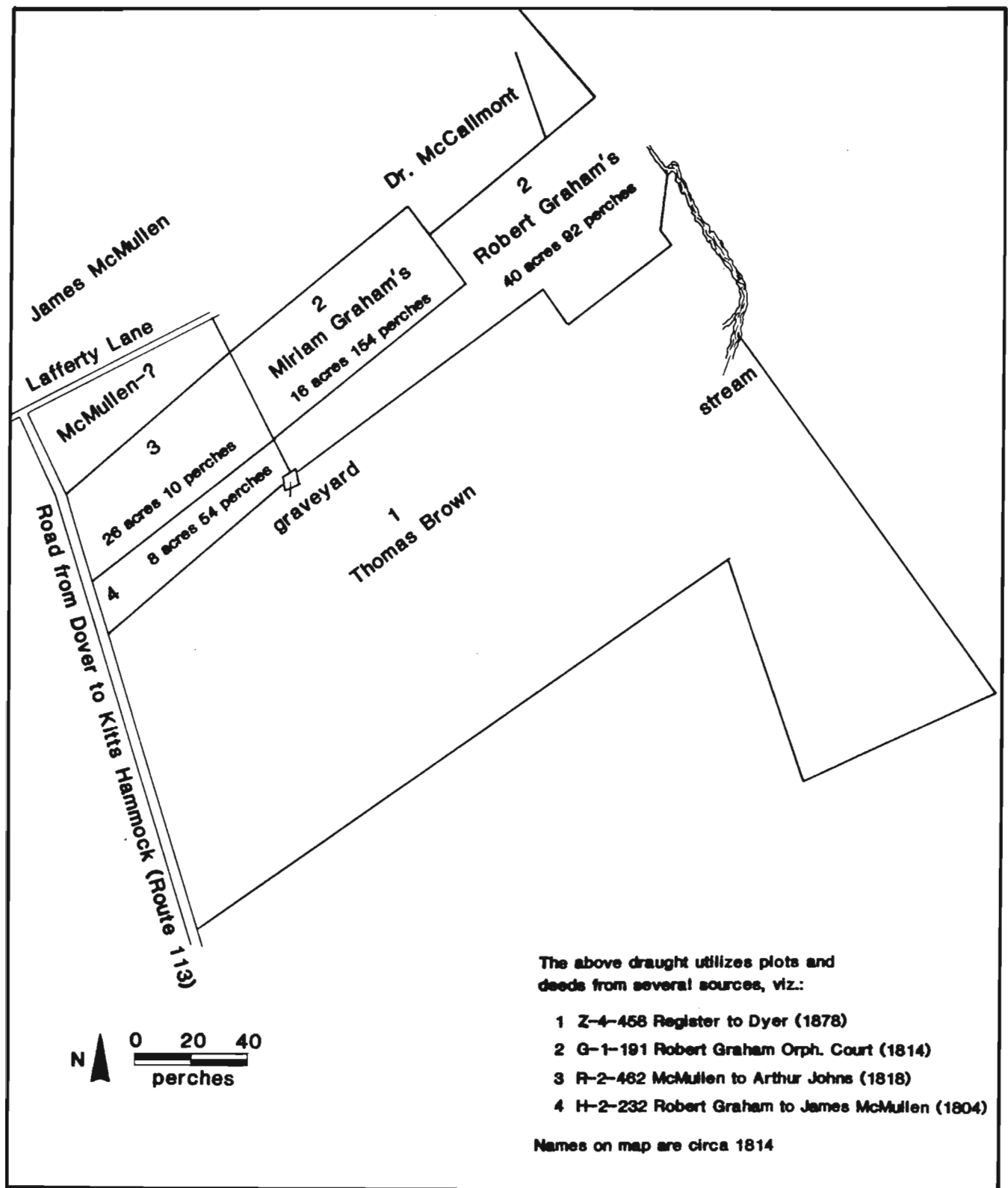
one or more 100-acre parcels of the original 400 acre Aberdeen tract. None of these records gives specific improvements made to the properties and never is there a mention of a cemetery plot.

Benjamin Brown, yeoman of Kent County, purchased a one-hundred acre parcel from George Gordon on November 13, 1741 (KCD M-1-166). The deed mentioned that his was part of a larger tract called Aberdeen originally set off to Thomas Clifford. Brown bought three more 100-acre parcels in the ensuing years from Mary Gruwell (also spelled Grewell) (KCD N-1-52, November 16, 1744), Ezekiel Roberts, bricklayer, (KCD N-1-170, August 14, 1747), and Jacob Gruwell (KCD O-1-288, May 13, 1755) (Figure 6). Brown had apparently changed his occupation before 1744 because these last three transactions list him as a bricklayer. Benjamin Brown had amassed a 400 acre tract, including much of the original 400 acre Aberdeen tract, and it is presumed he had been living on the property since 1744. Benjamin Brown's will, probated July 14, 1768, stated that his son Benjamin, Jr. was to receive the "dwelling house and plantation which I bought of Mary Grewell part of Aberdeen...." Brown's 400 acre tract was divided among his heirs in the decades after his death in 1767 and the smaller parcels served as farmsteads for the descendants (Figure 7). His son, Thomas Brown, had begun to reassemble the farm under his ownership during the 1810s. At the time of his death by drowning in the St. Jones River in 1822, Thomas had amassed 158 acres of the original Aberdeen Tract.

Thomas Brown's untimely death terminated the Brown family's connection with the property. By 1833, the farm measured 195 acres and was purchased by Francis Register from Andrew W. Harper



**FIGURE 7**  
**Composite Drawing, Landholdings in Graveyard Vicinity,**  
**circa 1814**



for \$900 (KCD G-3-135). Register sold the property to William Dyer in 1865 (KCD Z-4-458), and Dyer eventually amassed holdings totaling over 600 acres on both sides of present U.S. 113. An investigation of the Tatnall tombstone records shows that the Register family and all later owners of the farm were buried off the property, so although only two explicit named references to those buried in the cemetery were found (Brown and Graham), it is likely that few interments were made after Register bought the property. Thus, it is concluded that the cemetery was in use by 1767 (death of Benjamin Brown, Sr.) and was used until about 1840.

The ground surrounding the cemetery continued in use as farmland through the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century. In 1950, retired Air Force Colonel Harold J. Rau bought the property, then down to 149 acres, and eight years later sold off the U.S. 113 road frontage for businesses, and the remainder of the property to the James Julian, Inc. construction company. The land has not been farmed since 1959. It is currently a mixture of woodlots and fields in succession. The U.S. Government bought a portion of the eastern part of the farm a few years ago for the expansion of its facilities at Dover Air Force Base. Julian's subsidiary, Diversified Business Enterprises, Inc., now uses the farm as a repository for discarded construction equipment and supplies.

Maps and aerial photographs were also consulted for depictions of the cemetery either in use or as a relict feature. The 1948 U.S. Department of Agriculture flyover of Kent County showed a triangular patch of dark vegetation at the approximate

PLATE 1

1988 Aerial Photograph  
of Lafferty Lane Cemetery Site





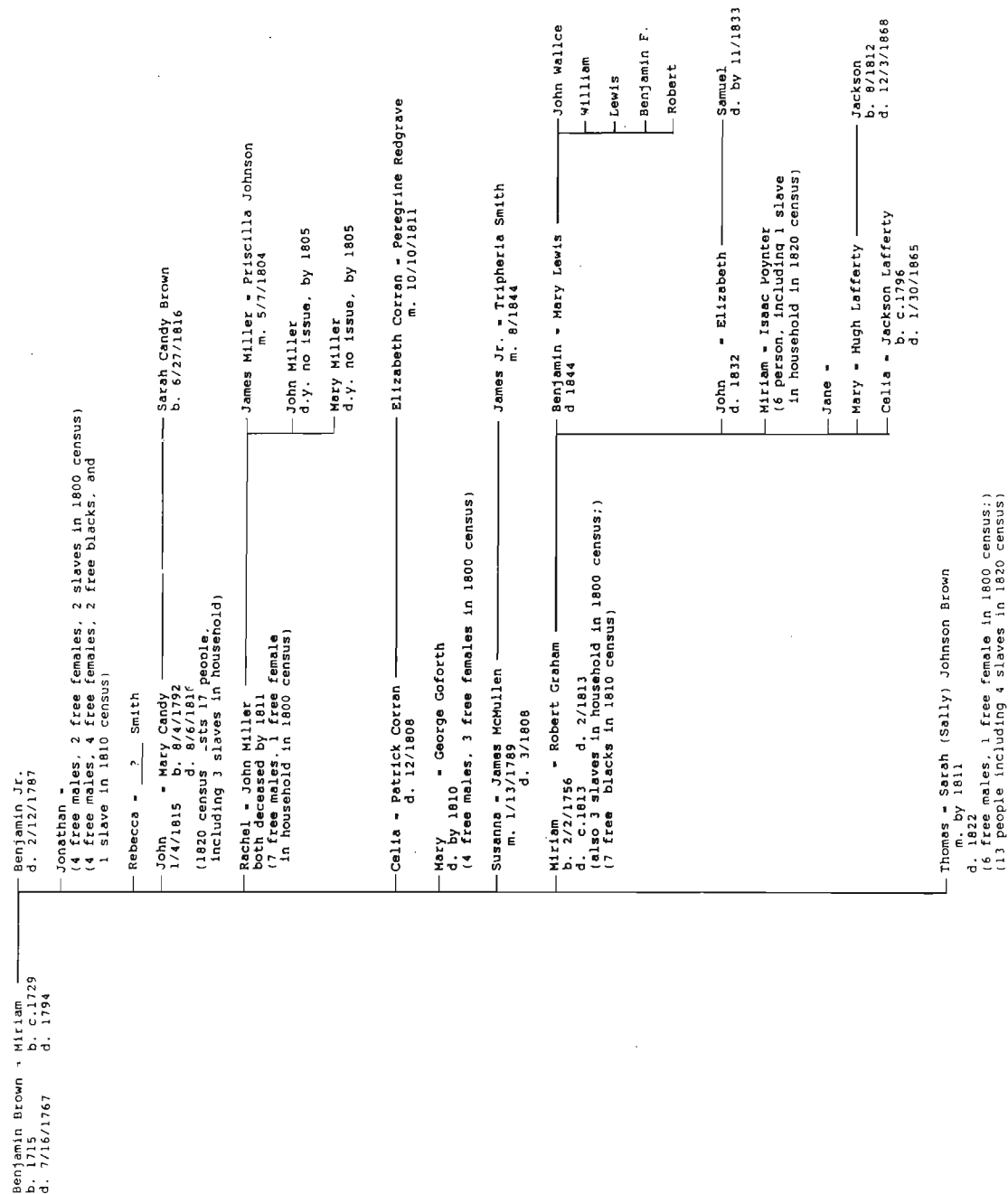
location of the Robert Graham grave on the Hopkins Plot of 1878 (Plate 1). No other graphic descriptions of the cemetery could be found.

Local residents were consulted for recollections of the cemetery, the names of those interred, or headstones with or without inscriptions. None of the employees of the current owner, Diversified Business Enterprises, had any recollection of the cemetery. The office manager, Mr. Johns, had worked at the site for much of the last 30 years and was completely unaware of the existence of a cemetery on the property. Colonel Rau died in the mid-1970s and his only known survivor, a widow from a second marriage, never lived on the property and had no recollection of the cemetery (Mrs. Harold Rau, personal communication, 1989). One informant, retired state photographer Harold Short of Dover, did provide the only known description of the abandoned cemetery. Mr. Short lived on a nearby farm from 1937 to 1946 and spent time rabbit hunting in the cemetery in the early 1940s. He recalled that the plot was heavily overgrown with honeysuckle, and in order to improve his overall visibility for hunting, he frequently sat atop an approximately 3' tall headstone which he described as the largest of several still visible among the tangled undergrowth. Mr. Short noted that several of the stones contained inscriptions, but he does not recall names or dates (Harold Short, personal communication, 1989). After military service in World War II, Mr. Short moved into the City of Dover and has not returned to the site.

## GENEALOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

After establishing that the Brown family was associated with the graveyard, an examination of archival resources was conducted in an effort to identify the potential occupants of the graveyard. From various public documents, including deeds, probate records, tax assessments, and census lists, a partial genealogy was created which may represent those people actually interred in the Lafferty Lane cemetery (Figure 8). Benjamin Brown, Sr. married Miriam \_\_\_\_\_ (born ca. 1729, died 1794), and they had 10 children: Benjamin, Jr., Jonathan, Rebecca, John, Rachel, Celia, Mary, Susanna or Susan, Miriam, and Thomas. Benjamin Brown died in 1767, and his wife Miriam remarried a local resident, Mark Maxwell. Of the children of Benjamin and Miriam Brown, Benjamin, Jr. died without issue on February 12, 1787. Rachel married John Miller and had at least three children, one of whom married. Celia married Patrick Corran and had at least one child, Elizabeth, who married Peregrine Redgrave. Mary married George Goforth and the 1800 census lists several children. Susanna married James McMullen on January 13, 1790 and they had at least one child, James, Jr. Miriam married Robert Graham and they had six children (Benjamin, John, Miriam, Jane, Mary, and Celia) and numerous grandchildren. Thirteen people, including four slaves, were living in Thomas Brown's household according to the 1820 census. Rebecca Brown married a man named Smith but nothing further is known. John Brown married Mary Candy and the 1820 census lists 17 people, including three slaves, living in their household. Jonathan's household contained 11 people, including two free blacks and one slave,

FIGURE 8  
Partial Brown Family Genealogy





according to the census of 1810.

The number of known descendants of Benjamin Brown, Sr., including parts of the third and fourth generations, totals 76 and is certainly an incomplete count of the possible number of descendants for the period 1760-1840. The dates of death of most of these 76 individuals range from the 1760s to the 1830s. When other unnamed family members listed in the census schedules and free blacks and slaves listed in the census data are included, the partial list of all household members is 94. Only two of the 94 are known to be buried outside this cemetery: Jackson Lafferty I and II are buried in a churchyard in Dover (Tatnall Tombstone Index, Hall of Records, Dover).

#### **EXCAVATION METHODS**

The initial task was to locate the approximate position of the plot on the modern landscape using the 1948 aerial photograph and past and present land surveys. Fortunately, the property lines and angles dividing Dyer's from Lafferty's farms in 1878 (Figure 4) is identical to current lines, and in September 1988, the corner was marked with an iron angle. The ground surrounding the property corner was heavily overgrown with vines, shrubs, and 30' trees and nothing could be seen on the surface. A spring steel probe was employed to penetrate the brush and topsoil to locate any fallen tombstones in the vicinity of the property corner. Although numerous buried angle irons, discarded steel pipe, and concrete chunks were found in this manner, no gravestones were located. A pedestrian survey of the ground around the corner also revealed no gravestones.